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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN PUSHES FOR OSCE SUMMIT WITH A/S BLAKE

REF: (A) ASTANA 2141
(B) ASTANA 1978
(C) ASTANA 2159

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¶11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶12. (SBU) SUMMARY: State Secretary-Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev and President Nazarbayev's foreign policy advisor Kairat Sarybai separately pressed Assistant Secretary Blake for U.S. support for a 2010 summit of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE). Blake noted that the United States is looking for assurances any summit would have a substantive outcome. He also noted that progress in all three OSCE dimensions, preservation of ODIHR, as well as progress on Kazakhstan's domestic human-dimension issues, particularly the Zhovtis case, would help garner support for a Summit. Sarybai argued that Zhovtis was treated equally under the law, and Saudabayev urged for him to apply for a presidential pardon. Both stressed that a high-level U.S. visit to Kazakhstan or a bilateral meeting between Presidents Obama and Nazarbayev in Washington would signal the "deepening mutual relationship" between the United States and Kazakhstan. END SUMMARY.

OSCE SUMMIT

¶13. (SBU) In separate December 15 meetings with Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake, State Secretary-Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev and President Nursultan Nazarbayev's foreign policy advisor Kairat Sarybai pressed for the United States to support a 2010 OSCE summit. Both thanked the United States for its agreement to include a summit reference in the Athens Ministerial final declaration. Saudabayev welcomed U.S. input on possible topics. Blake reminded both that the OSCE Permanent Council must certify the achievement of sufficient progress in all three dimensions before deciding on a summit. He suggested to Saudabayev that Kazakhstan ensure improvement in the OSCE human dimension, defend the mandate of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and expand OSCE's role in Afghanistan in order to garner the necessary support. He noted that the potential summit topic of a new European security structure would likely meet resistance and that substance focused on Afghanistan would be "much better." Saudabayev acknowledged the

difficulty of addressing the security architecture of Europe at a summit, and noted that Afghanistan will likely be the only topic in the end. Blake underlined that a summit not preclude the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM). Saudabayev passionately reassured Blake that the "HDIM would go on as planned. We fully support ODIHR's work," he argued. "It is the organization that keeps us all moving forward."

ZHOVTIS CASE "CASTS A SHADOW"

¶4. (SBU) A/S Blake noted to both interlocutors that progress on Kazakhstan's domestic human-dimension issues, particularly the case of prominent civil-society activist Yvgeniy Zhovtis, also would help garner support for the summit (ref A). "The case casts a shadow" on Kazakhstan's OSCE ambitions, said A/S Blake. Sarybai firmly argued that Zhovtis' international stature should not warrant special legal treatment. "He was treated as 'citizen Zhovtis,'" said Sarybai. He highlighted the government's Human Rights Action Plan as proof of "Kazakhstan's steady progress" towards democracy.

¶5. (SBU) Saudabayev agreed with Blake that "[the Zhovtis affair] is the last thing [Kazakhstan] needs." The penal colony is "not letting a fly land on Zhovtis, but he continues to cause controversy," complained Saudabayev. (NOTE: Zhovtis was officially sanctioned twice for refusing to accept jobs offered by the penal-colony administration (ref A). END NOTE.) One way to resolve the case is for Zhovtis to ask for a presidential pardon, said Saudabayev. "You can help by convincing (Zhovtis) to apply," he asserted, adding that he would personally assure the Pardon Commission reviewed the case quickly. "It can be done by the end of this year." (NOTE: Zhovtis' lawyers have told us that Zhovtis refuses to apply for a pardon, because it would require him to admit his legal guilt, which he denies (ref B). END NOTE.)

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¶6. (SBU) Blake also suggested that decriminalization of libel in Kazakhstan and implementation of the human rights national action plan would help convince the United States of Kazakhstan's sincerity in making progress domestically. Noting his productive meeting with civil society representatives in Almaty (ref C), he recommended that Saudabayev consider meeting civil society groups in the United States on the margins of the Annual Bilateral Consultations in February. Saudabayev welcomed the idea, and said he would follow up with his Ambassador in Washington.

PUSH FOR HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

¶7. (SBU) Both Saudabayev and Sarybai pressed for a bilateral meeting between Presidents Obama and Nazarbayev on the margins of the April Global Nuclear Security Summit and highlighted that a high-level U.S. visit would signal a "deepening mutual relationship." Saudabayev noted that China's President Hu Jintao travelled to Kazakhstan twice in the past year, and Russia's President Medvedev has visited "incalculable times" since taking office. President Nazarbayev has never wavered in his partnership with the United States, argued Saudabayev. A bilateral meeting in Washington or President Obama's visit to Kazakhstan would "prove the strength of the relationship." Blake responded that resolution of some issues discussed could encourage high-level visits.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: The Athens Ministerial declaration has given a major boost to the Kazakhstani's hopes for a summit just as they prepare to take over the OSCE chairmanship. They continue, sincerely we believe, to seek our support and guidance to turn this wish into a reality. The Zhovtis case, however, casts a shadow over Kazakhstan's ambitions. Although Foreign Minister Saudabayev seems to fully grasp the optics, his hope that Zhovtis will apply a pardon is unrealistic. Despite sincere concern in some quarters, we see no evidence that Kazakhstan will undercut the OSCE's human dimension during their chairmanship. Continued positive engagement on our part will help to ensure that Kazakhstan's words become reality.
END COMMENT.

¶9. (SBU) A/S Blake cleared this cable.

HOAGLAND